

Garamendi Sounds the Alarm□□□□

Black Voice News

By Cheryl Brown

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Ontario- Without water a community cannot grow, houses cannot be built, jobs cannot expand and the economic future of San Bernardino depends on growth. If there is no water there is no growth and the economy will be badly damaged as a result. This was the premise of the Second Annual San Bernardino Water Conference held last week at the Ontario Convention Center.

"We have a problem!" declared Lt. Governor John Garamendi the keynote speaker. He was addressing the day long event that brought together key stakeholders to make clear exactly how difficult the water situation is in the region and why it is unlikely to get better. One key is industry the other key are the residents, the end users.

According to Supervisor Paul Biane, "Water drives our economy and we cannot continue to rely on imported water," while Supervisor Gary Ovitt told the audience, "today we are going to craft a water policy action plan."

Garamendi called the water situation in California a crisis and said, "we don't have 15-20 years to deal with it." He explained that climate change is real. The snow packs on the mountains have all but disappeared, and the pending disaster of a predicted earthquake with less snow will raise the Pacific Ocean and compromise the Delta and fresh water sources.

He said that people will have to conserve, lawns will have to be replaced with natural

vegetation, we will have to recycle the water that we use, the contaminated water must be cleaned up and we must reduce our carbon footprint.

Mark Dowling, Director of the Economic Development Agency further sounded the alarm. "We take water for granted. Each person uses about 120 gallons of water per day and we have no concept of a water shortage," He concluded by giving the example of the recent run up in the price of oil that has set our economy in a tailspin. "We have to raise consciousness. It will shift (our usage) as it did with oil," he stated. Unfortunately he indicated by the time residents understand the problem rates will have increased substantially.

"Once the water situation in the region is understood, we can begin moving all industries and residents towards common-sense solutions to ensure our future water supply," said Ali Sahabi, SE Corporation, Corona, and founder of the Green Valley Initiative. "The alarm has been sounded," he said. Sahabi hosted Garamendi's early morning reception.

The rest of the day was filled with laying the groundwork for the issue, as experts, business leaders and politicians are convinced of the importance of the issue of water in the Inland Empire.

Nearly 1000 people attended the event hosted by Senator Bob Dutton, Supervisors Biane and Ovitt, Ontario Mayor Paul Leon, and the Building Industry Association, Baldy View Chapter.